

Ripley 1983a) even though the illustration by Henry (in Ali and Ripley 1983a, Plate 18) depicts the female of the western race, as the crown is painted brown. Similarly, Dick (in Ali and Ripley 1983b, Plates 29 and 30) has also illustrated the female of the western race, both in the sitting posture and in flight as viewed from underneath; the white tip on the tail has been shown, whereas the eastern race appears to lack this.

One of us (P.P.) had previously seen this species in late February 1984, when he had a quick glimpse of a male in the Adhodiya nullah in the Gir Wildlife Sanctuary, also situated in southern Saurashtra. The bird, immediately identified as a male by the distinctive dark general coloration and dark red abdomen, landed on a branch of a tree with three other birds, but they were soon chased away by house crows.

From the few records in India, this rare falcon is understood to be a passage migrant from the main breeding grounds in China to the wintering grounds in east and south Africa, though a few

birds breed in Assam in India. The birds have been seen in Karnataka on the west coast of India in November and December on their south-west migration across the Indian Ocean to east Africa. The northern-most record on the west coast so far has been near Bombay (Ali and Ripley 1983a), and there are no published records of this species from Gujarat. The observations reported here, therefore, constitute a northward extension of this species on the west coast of India and suggest that the redlegged falcon may be using more of our western coastline on their migration than was previously known.

On our survey, we were fortunate to have Narendrasinh Jhala, Rishad Pravez and Parimal Joshi with us. We are grateful to Prof. R.M. Naik for his comments on the manuscript and to Shrivraj Kumar Khachar for permitting us the use of his excellent library.

April 27, 1989

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5. ADDITION TO THE DIETARY OF WHITEBREASTED WATERHEN *AMAURORNIS PHOENICURUS* (PENNANT)

The whitebreasted waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus* is common in the reed-covered marshy wastelands, stagnant water bodies and along the river banks in Tiruchirapalli, Tamil Nadu. THE BOOK OF INDIAN BIRDS (Ali, S. 1979) states that its food includes "Insects, worms, molluscs, grain and shoots of paddy and marsh plants". At about 0630 hrs on 29 April 1989 we observed a bird of the species emerge from among the reeds on a bank of Kudamurutu, a branch of the Uyyakondan canal of the Cauvery, pick

up a fallen fruit of korkapilly (*Pithecolobium dulce*), isolate the white caruncle from the seed and eat it, breaking it to bits by pecking at it several times. Whether or not this forms a common food item for the bird is not known.

June 15, 1989

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